

# Condo controversy could go to state

## Residents react angrily to idea of ending commission's involvement

By **JENNIFER MANN**

The Patriot Ledger

The Scituate Conservation Commission is considering passing the torch on the Herring Brook Meadow hearing process, amid conflict-of-interest questions that have pitted the commission against other town officials, including the board of selectmen.

### SCITUATE

During the commission's meeting last night, member Michael Clark said the state Department of Environmental Protection could better handle the swirling accusations that have accompanied the hearing in recent months.

"No one can impinge their ability to rule

and judge this project," he said.

Clark moved that the commission continue its wetlands hearing until April 30, then close the hearing and either deny or grant a special permit without conditions, which would essentially wash the commission's hands of Herring Brook Meadow, a proposed 60-condo affordable-housing project off Route 3A.

That suggestion triggered noisy protests from some of the more than 50 residents who filled the meeting room to overflowing last night.

"I can't continue to deal with the accusations of conflict of interest and wrongdoing," Clark said.

One resident yelled, "Then resign!"

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# Scituate condo flap could go to the state

## ■ HOUSING

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Another shouted, "If you can't take the heat, get out of the kitchen!"

Selectmen last week announced that they might appoint an outside agent to oversee the hearing process, or at least act as a point person for concerned residents.

Developer James Motzkin of Peabody wants to build the 60 condominiums on about 4 acres of land. He is seeking approval under Chapter 40B, the state's affordable-housing law.

The wife of town Conservation Agent Vincent Kalishes owns a home on part of the site. Although Kalishes has recused himself when the conservation commission is dealing with the proposal, some residents think he is still exerting influence on the commission.

Clark last night suggested that selectmen violated the Open Meeting Law by discussing the project at their last meeting. Speaking as a resident, advisory committee member Anthony Vegnani had raised the issue during a public-comment period last night.

"I feel that's totally inappropriate," Clark said, talking about selectmen did. "I feel the way it's been handled outside of the hearing is to put pressure on the conservation commission."

Selectmen Chairman Paul Reidy declined to comment on Clark's accusa-

tion, saying he wanted to talk with town counsel first.

Vegnani said he just wants to see a new conservation agent appointed for the Herring Brook Meadow project.

Residents said they are looking for more accountability and worried that the issue will disappear if it goes to the state level.

"You say you don't want to deal with it. Well, maybe you need to go back and look at the fact that we need an agent here," neighbor Gloria Hollstein said.

"We don't have anything personal against anyone here," neighbor Susan Daileader said. "We're just trying to get our voices heard."

Conservation commission member Kenneth Conway responded that involving a third party would just further convolute the process.

"Once you do, you get into this type of issue," he said, referring to the loud back-and-forth that marked last night's meeting.

The commission voted unanimously to continue the hearing but did not decide whether to close it April 30.

Member Frank Snow spoke against Clark's suggestion.

"We're the gatekeepers," he said. "It's our responsibility to go forward and go through with the process."

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## YOUR VIEWS

Tell us why you think the town or the state is better equipped to handle the controversy surrounding the proposed Herring Brook Meadow housing development.

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